MODERN KNOWLEDGE AND OLD BELIEFS

Being a Sequel to

"THE CHURCHES AND MODERN THOUGHT"

BY

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CHAPTER I

Christian Apologetics. The Atom and Indeterminism. Theories of Certain Mathematicians. Relativity. Evolution.

WHEN a man brought up in the Christian tradition has the desire and obtains the leisure to submit it to a thorough examination, he soon finds himself immersed in Christian apologetics. God having graciously vouchsafed a definite revelation of Himself some two thousand years ago in Palestine, he may think it passing strange that all these apologetics should be required to substantiate its occurrence; still he starts the study of them expecting that this disturbing thought, as well as every other ground for suspicion of essential dogmas, will be swept away. His disillusionment is pathetic. The very arguments adduced, allied with the significant admissions, serve but to arouse fresh sus-

picions and to confirm previous ones. Sometimes contradictory, often transparently thin, almost always unconvincing, their very weakness strengthens unbelief. It is, too, just where the apologetics should be most convincing that they are most unsatisfactory. Evidence of the Resurrection, such as, to use Huxley's expression, we are "morally bound to require," there is none. The higher criticism and the apologetics necessitated by it expose this clearly. This stupendous miracle, this central "fact" upon which the Church has hitherto rested, apparently never took place!

Thus, if there is one thing more than another which finally converts the inquirer to Rationalism, it is Christian apologetics. In fact, if there were cheap reprints of this literature, the cause they would assist most would be Rationalism! Lately in books, in the press, and from the pulpit, a heavy crop of apologetics, with novel variations, has arisen. The entry of certain religious-minded scientists into the ranks of the apologists has encouraged the Churches

to proclaim anew a reconciliation of religion and science. These scientists, however, are apologists only for a vague Theism or Deism, and not for either the Apostles' Creed, or the Creed of Saint Athanasius, or the Nicene Creed. The few who lend their support to the truth of the Christian Revelation are interpreting it only in an allegorical sense.

Also, it is well to bear in mind that slovenly thought is as possible with the shining lights of science as with anyone else the moment they go outside their own domain of knowledge. This slovenly thought always has been, and always will be, harmful to man's right progress; a phenomenon ably exposed by Mrs. Janet Chance in her book *Intellectual Crime* (Noel Douglas, 1933).

I took these fresh apologetics into consideration when I said in my note to the new edition of *The Churches and Modern Thought* in the Thinker's Library series, " that all that has occurred in the interval does but serve to support the facts

and strengthen the conclusions." However, as I am now writing an addendum, let us search and see whether any crumbs of comfort for the believer have fallen of late from the tables either of science or of theology.

The Atom and Indeterminism.

The atom is not the simple thing it was once taken to be. It appears to be a structure of what are called electrons and protons; while the material universe may consist of some definite though unknown number of these electrons and protons. There have been various theories of the atom, and to-morrow there will probably be yet another. The only point that concerns us here is that the electrons seem to behave very oddly. They seem not to be subject to the laws of the older physics; so certain pious-minded physicists, Sir Arthur Eddington being one of them (vide *The Nature of the Physical World*), have jumped to the conclusion that the electron is not

subject to scientific law. This is cheering news for the Theist, since the causal law of science negatives free-will and is, therefore, in direct conflict with a doctrine essential to most schools of theology. But this assumption of the lawlessness, of the "free-will" of the electron is wholly unwarranted at present, in view of the fact that the investigation of its behaviour has by no means been completed as yet. The task is fraught with great and, so far, insuperable difficulties.

Many physicists, notably Max Planck (vide his new book *Where is Science Going?* [Allen & Unwin], with Preface by Einstein) and Einstein, have repudiated all Eddington's interpretations which give the public to understand that determinism has been undermined by the latest researches in physics. In the opinion of Professor Einstein, "indeterminism is quite an illogical concept." The contentions of those who find in the alleged spontaneous jumps of electrons from one orbit to another evidence of their own volitions being independent of

the principle of causation, and who "attribute something like free-will even to the routine processes of inorganic nature," are contemptuously dismissed by him with: "That nonsense is not merely nonsense; it is objectionable nonsense" (vide *Literary Guide*, August, 1933). The principle of indeterminism in relation to free-will and miracles appears to be a temporary asylum of ignorance, and Einstein and others expect an early restoration of the principles of rigorous causality within the domain of science. (Vide pp. 590–1 of *An Outline of Modern Knowledge*, Gollancz, 1932.)

There is a reply by Sir Arthur Eddington to Mr. Chapman Cohen, the President of the National Secular Society, which is of special interest owing to its being the first to have been given by him for publication. Sir Arthur prefaces it: "I have not hitherto replied to any unfavourable criticisms of my book, *The Nature of the Physical World*, or my Swarthmore Lecture, *Science and the Unseen World*." This reply will be found, together with a rejoinder by Mr. Cohen, in

the latter's *God and the Universe* (Pioneer Press, 1931); a treatise in clear and simple language eminently suitable for the enlightenment of the man of little leisure, who may also be recommended to read, too, a particularly lucid work, *Determinism or Free-will?* (Pioneer Press, new and revised edition, 1919), in which the argument for determinism is upheld by the same author.

The latest refutation of Sir Arthur Eddington's theory of indeterminism appears in *The Universe of Science* (Watts, 1932), by H. Levy, Professor of Mathematics at the Imperial College of Science, University of London. No reader of Eddington and Jeans willing to study the views of their critics can afford to omit the perusal of this work. In Chapter IV we are furnished with cogent argument in support of Professor Levy's opinion that, "whatever further may develop, the form of determinism already separated out by science stands." "That," he considers, "rests on unescapable evidence." Section V of this Chapter is of special interest to us, as it

deals with the sweeping statement of Sir Arthur Eddington (in a broadcast address on Science and Religion, March 23, 1930) that, "so far as we have yet gone in our probing of the material universe, we cannot find a particle of evidence in favour of determinism. There is no need to doubt our intuition of free-will." Also the assertion by Sir James Jeans, that "science has no longer any unanswerable arguments to bring against our innate conviction of free-will." Professor Levy finds these conclusions to have scarcely the remotest connections with the grounds on which they are presumably based. "No one," he says, "doubts our intuition of free-will. What one is certainly entitled to question is the grounds for that intuition, or that free-will in this sense has any scientific meaning."

Another able criticism of Sir Arthur's theories will be found in the Chapter on Scientific Metaphysics in Mr. Bertrand Russell's *The Scientific Outlook* (George Allen and Unwin, first published 1931). Personally I am disposed to think that

protagonists of free-will take far too little notice of the workings of heredity and environment, and of how vastly these differ for each and every human being. Anyone in the enjoyment of normal mental health has the will-power to carry out a decision; but what about all that has led up to that decision? Were it possible accurately to determine all the inherited qualities and all the happenings from birth to the moment in question, and accurately to gauge the mutual effect of these two influences, could not the decision be foretold? We have the power of choice, but the choice itself is determined. I may add that a recognition of this fact, far from being unhelpful to conduct and happiness, is, as I have explained elsewhere (vide pp. 178–9 of my book), precisely the reverse. That, given determinism, "there can be no meaning in reason, no pursuit of truth or goodness," as a learned Bishop has just told us in his latest volume, *Scientific Theory and Religion*, is not the experience of a Rationalist. The pious indeterminist, aware of his weak-

nesses, *prays to his Father in Heaven not to lead him into temptation.* The determinist takes care not to tempt himself, avoiding, so far as he possibly can, the situations where he is sure to be tempted. This action on his part may spring from what Matthew Arnold described as "morality touched with emotion," or purely from utilitarianism. The beneficial result is the same, and he is more likely than the indeterminist to attain it.

I speak from personal observations spread over a long life of fairly wide experience.

Theories of Certain Mathematicians.

Sir James Jeans has come to the conclusion that "the universe shows evidence of a designing or controlling power that has something in common with our individual minds—not, so far as we have discovered, emotion, morality, or æsthetic appreciation, but the tendency to think in the way which, for want of a better word, we describe as mathematical" (*The Mysterious Universe,*

p. 149). Also he says: "The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a machine" (idem, p. 148). That a man of science should admit the existence of a God, of whatever kind, may please the Churches—their plight is desperate enough; but the search of the man who desires to remain a Theist is, like that of Shaw's black girl,[1] for a God to worship, not for a mathematical genius indifferent to all else but doing abstruse calculations. Asking for bread, he is given a stone, and his suspicions are confirmed. To quote Mr. H. G. Wells in his humorous tilt at Sir James Jeans's conception of the cosmos, he is told that it "is all a thought in the mind of a Jeans-like Deity whose symbol is the square root of minus one" (vide p. 717 of *The Work, Wealth, and Happiness of Mankind*; Heinemann, 1932). In the opinion of Professor Levy, "the assertion of contemporary scientists, who state that the universe is a fickle collection of indeterminate

[1] Or, for the matter of that, C. H. Maxwell's white girl.

happenings, and a great thought in the mind of its Architect, a pure Mathematician, serves merely to divert the activity of the scientific brain from its concentration on the contradictions and confusions of the all too real outward world to a state of passive and unreal contemplation" (vide p. vii of the Introduction to *The Universe of Science*).

A point not to be lost sight of is that both Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington deny the existence of a material universe. This has not escaped the notice of Mr. Joseph McCabe, for in the revised Thinker's Library edition of his book, *The Existence of God*, he says, p. 150: "In short, this entire claim that Theism has entered upon a new and more hopeful phase because of changes in either science or philosophy is based upon crude interpretations of the personal opinions of two or three scientific men who, the general public would be surprised to know, reject the magnificent story of the evolution of the stars, planets, and life, put together by

twenty other sciences. If the material universe was derived from consciousness there is no material universe and no evolution. There is not even a possibility of knowing what is in the minds of others. The splendid and necessary use of mathematics in modern physics has had the disadvantage of so familiarizing men of science with abstract ideas that some of them almost feel that realities are superfluous. But let us keep a sense of proportion. Physics is one of fifty branches of science. All the others deal with atomic matter, just as they did in the nineteenth century. To say that it has been 'resolved into energy' is much like saying that St. Paul's doesn't exist because we find that it is composed of stones."

Yet another work, *The New Background of Science* (Cambridge University Press, 1933), has appeared from the pen of Sir James Jeans, one purpose of which is the "amplification and clarification" of portions of his previous work, *The Mysterious Universe*. In this the mathematical deity

drops out—at least he is not mentioned—but there remains a mind reigning supreme and alone. Many readers of this latest call on our powers of imagination will agree with Surgeon Rear-Admiral C. M. Beadnell when, after a searching criticism (in the *Literary Guide* of August, 1933), he concludes: "Sir James Jeans's advocacy of a moribund universe, coupled with his relegation of it to the limbo of subjectivity, places him in a dilemma. His only means of escape would appear to be through the assumption that, after all, this colossal dump will be an ever-present tormenting thought in the 'mind which reigns supreme and alone.'"

Again, we have the metaphysical researches of an eminent mathematician and philosopher of nature, Professor Alfred North Whitehead, leading him to hold that we cannot make sense of nature without the assistance of conceptions which transcend nature—such as that of God (vide his *Science in the Modern World*; Cambridge, 1927). He, in other words, finds

the hypothesis of God to be more reasonable than any other. But to be the God of the Christian or any other theistic religion this Deity must be personal, inspiring our love and our worship. One cannot but agree with the Rev. Professor W. R. Matthews, D.D. (formerly Dean of King's College, London, and Professor of the Philosophy of Religion in the University of London, and now Dean of Exeter), when, in the chapter he contributes to *An Outline of Modern Knowledge*, he says: "We are compelled to maintain that God cannot be less or lower than personal. There is no reason why religion should object to the description of God as a 'super-personal' Being, so long as it is understood that 'super-personal' includes 'personal' and is not a polite synonym for 'impersonal.'"

As regards an impersonal God, therefore, whether he resembles a Thought, a Force, or a Machine, both Religionist and Rationalist see the extreme absurdity of any religious emotion or enthusiasm about an *It*. As regards a "personal" or "super-personal"

Being, if He is to inspire our affection and respect, He must embody in some way the human concept of moral excellence, and cannot be indifferent to our aspirations or to the sufferings of all sentient life. The unprejudiced inquirer, however, confronted by the hard facts of his cosmic environment, finds the evidence conclusive that, were there a "Being" in any sense "personal," "He" must be utterly callous, and therefore totally without moral excellence.

Relativity.

Let us assume that Einstein's theory of relativity, and perhaps even the speculations founded upon it, are generally accepted by the world of science. What I wish to call attention to now is the glee with which the apologist has, *more suo*, seized the opportunity, or what appears to him an opportunity, to twit science. "See," he says, "how your great Isaac Newton's theory of gravitation, in which you have believed, and upon which you have based your cal-

culations all these years, is, so you say, wrong after all. On the other hand, what we take to be the fundamentals of belief are never, and indeed never can be, changed. They are truths, God's Truth." But, as pointed out by Mr. Bertrand Russell, " men who speak in this way have not grasped the great idea of successive approximations. No man who has the scientific temper asserts that what is now believed in science is *exactly* right; he asserts that it is a stage on the road towards the exact truth. When a change occurs in science, as, for example, from Newton's law of gravitation to Einstein's, what had been achieved is not overthrown, but is replaced by something slightly more accurate" (pp. 66–7 of *The Scientific Outlook*, George Allen and Unwin, 1931).

Science has to continue learning and correcting, and the alteration necessitated by Einstein's theory in the conception of time and space is a present-day example of this process. Compare the characteristics of the scientific method with those of the

theological, and remember how the latter bring in their train such tragedies as the torture and burning of a Giordano Bruno. The Aristotelian conception of the universe having been adopted by Holy Church, it was defended with a passionate obstinacy which led to the suppression of incompatible new knowledge with ruthless severity, and, indeed, at times with devilish cruelty. The present Bishop of Birmingham has well said (in a sermon preached in Westminster Abbey on Sunday, September 25, 1927): "The man of science admits his mistakes without trying to conceal his retraction behind elaborate and evasive formulæ."

We hear that "what science shows about the universe in 1930 is as different from the picture drawn in 1900 as the latter is from the one drawn in the year Newton published his *Principia*." This is the opinion at least of Mr. John Langdon-Davies in his interesting work, *Man and his Universe* (Harpers, 1930). With this change of picture, he continues, "there is bound to be

sooner or later a *new* [italics are mine] religion, in the sense in which we have learned to use the term in these pages." This religion does not embrace a desire for immortality, for he regards that as "the symptom of a disease." It would, it seems, be a religion resembling the one Professor Julian Huxley asks us to accept in his *Religion Without Revelation* (Benn, 1927). Neither of these writers means by the word "religion" anything that would in the least be in accord with the supernatural dogmas of Christianity, or of any of the other great religions. The religion is to be a brand new one. The creeds of to-day being no longer tenable, they are to die.

This conclusion, arrived at with the knowledge acquired up to date, is to all intents and purposes the same as that which I tried to express years ago when I said (vide last page of my book): "Should the secrets of our existence still lie concealed in the womb of time, their birth will be the death, not the renascence, of the dying creeds of to-day."

Evolution.

The net result of further research is to establish the theory of evolution more firmly than ever. In the words of Julian Huxley, H. G. Wells, and G. P. Wells, in their monumental work, *The Science of Life* (Cassell, 1931), evolution is "an incontrovertible fact." The big advance in the study of evolution by exact methods (*e.g.* the study of the process of mutations by methods similar to those inaugurated by De Vries) can be estimated by the perusal of *The Scientific Basis of Evolution* (Faber & Faber, 1933), an expansion of the Messenger lectures given at Cornell University in 1931 by Thomas Hunt Morgan, Professor of Biology. The following passage by this outstanding leader of genetic investigation may be noted :—

"Since Darwin's time there has been a good deal of valuable criticism of the theory from biologists themselves; there has also been found much further evidence that has supported the theory. . . . But when we

consider the causes of evolution we get at once on to debatable ground where the widest possible divergence of opinion exists, not only among biologists but among other theorists who have ventured to make *ex cathedra* statements concerning the directive agents of evolution."

In my chapter on Evolution I drew attention to the same point—that it is the mechanism of evolution, not evolution itself, which is debatable. I do so again because I find that the laity still continue to hear from obscurantist quarters that Darwinism is now no longer generally accepted, and are led thereby to suppose that evolution itself is discredited.[1]

Also I take this opportunity once again to call attention to the plight of the theologians—an ever-increasing number; Lambeth now fully accepts evolution on behalf of English and American Churches—who have been intellectually forced to

[1] As a matter of fact, Darwin's position has become impregnable; vide Chap II of *Concerning Man's Origin*, by Sir Arthur Keith (Watts; Forum Series; 1s.)

accept evolution. There is a rock ahead for them, which must be avoided at all costs, or it will wreck Theism. I notice they are chary of alluding to it. Attention is directed elsewhere. Professor T. H. Morgan seems to have noticed this too. In his chapter on "Adaptation and Natural Selection" (p. 117) he warns us that "we must be on our guard lest continuous attention to the marvels of nature directs our thoughts away from the other side of the picture—the wastefulness, the cruelty, the tragedies of nature, as they appear to us."

Yes! The marvels are extraordinarily absorbing, and the pious evolutionist, consciously or unconsciously, takes care that they receive "continuous attention." To any one genuinely wishful to direct his thoughts to that other side of the picture I recommend the perusal of Mr. H. G. Wells's study of it in his novel *The Undying Fire*. I must warn him, however, that he may find it difficult not to feel in sympathy with the chief character, the Headmaster, Mr. Huss, when, after giving copious and

poignant illustrations from natural history, and while he himself was suffering from cancer and awaiting an operation from which he might not recover, he said: "Either the world life is the creation of a being inspired by a malignancy at once filthy, petty, and enormous, or it displays a carelessness, an indifference, a disregard for justice . . ."

It was the suffering that he of all others saw so clearly in nature that prevented the gentle-natured Darwin—"horrid wicked man" I heard him called in 1871—from embracing any accepted form of Theism. My comments in detail on this aspect of evolution still remain entirely unanswered. There has been no attempt to dispute them. Critics of my book have been as silent as the grave. I made manifest how the theory of evolution not only conflicts with theological cosmogonies, but with Theism itself; with belief in a Creator that we could by any possible flight of imagination bring ourselves to love and to worship. I have shown (pp. 129–33) that nothing could be

more diabolically cruel, where sentient life is concerned, than the evolution plan. What, then, are we to think of its "author"? Surely it is noonday clear that, if we postulate Almighty God as the directive agent, Theism strikes a rock. It will be wrecked. It will go to pieces. It cannot be salved.

Feeling, as I do strongly, that this is so, I find myself unimpressed by any theory in support of Theism which seeks to embrace the facts of evolution.

Take the new philosophy which Professor Conway Lloyd Morgan (b. Feb., 1852), D.Sc., LL.D., F.R S., has elaborated in his *Emergent Evolution* (Williams & Norgate, 1923), a philosophy which Dean Inge refers to, in his Fison Memorial Lecture of 1926, as the "popular formula 'emergent evolution.'" The point I wish my reader to grasp with regard to this latest attempt to dress up evolution as a moral plan is that the new conception of this philosopher-scientist is only a speculative supplement to the scientific conception of evolution which he accepts *in toto*. The cruelty of the evolu-

द्वारा सप्रेम भेट ता

tion plan, however, seems of little concern to him. Such callous indifference to others' pain and destruction amazes me, and I begin to think that an easy chair in a comfortable study renders these theistically-minded philosophers incapable of conceiving the panorama of suffering, frequently amounting to extreme terror and agony, which the evolution scheme unfolds.

No pen could adequately describe the piteous misery of sentient life that has continued without a break every moment, day and night, throughout our planet for hundreds of millions of years, the intensity ever increasing with the development of the nervous system. Few women at all realize that the dangerous diseases, and consequent high death rate, of the babies they go through so much to bring into the world are part and parcel of a cruel and crudely wasteful plan fitted to have been devised by a Supreme Devil rather than by a Supreme God. Few of the kind hearts now interested in child and animal welfare and in birth-control clinics ever realize—or

is it "permit themselves to realize"?—that the resolve at long last to interfere with Nature's plans has been prompted by "humanitarianism working on rational principles" (vide last lines of my book), not by a deity or his priests.

How many women, again, visualize the appalling suffering their sex in particular have endured in the past—in India until comparatively lately—through the absence of sane medical attention? Even if they did, it would never occur to them to connect it with the inevitability of such ignorance through the slow progress of the evolution plan. Similarly with regard to their sisters' sufferings until recently from cruel religious practices. But here there is a special excuse for their not thinking the matter out too much. The pulpit has explained to them that revelation has been progressive, and therefore these practices must be regarded as early stages in God's revelation of Himself!

In the *Benedicite, Omnia Opera* (the alternative canticle to the *Te Deum Lau-*

damus in the morning prayer of the Church of England) all dumb animals and all "children of men" are called upon to praise and magnify their Creator. In the light of modern knowledge, how can we join in this song of praise with complete sincerity? We cannot at one moment agree with the Bishop of Birmingham that the problem[1] of evil is "an impasse," and at the next pretend that "the most impenetrable of all the barriers which man tries to pierce by speculative inquiry" has disappeared. We may note with satisfaction that philosophers like Professor Lloyd Morgan do not repudiate scientific knowledge, but we must recognize that they are no more able now than at the time my book was written to reconcile evolution with any form of Theism. Theological treatises in these days have much to say concerning "Reality," and they are pleased to tell us that what we used to

[1] The existence of evil is no more mysterious than any other manifestation of the energies which have shaped the world Read Gowans Whyte's stimulating study of evil and its cure in *The Natural History of Evil* (Watts).

consider real is, according to modern science, not so. I wish to suggest, in spite of Christian Science teaching to the contrary, that there is one thing at least which is only too real—namely, Pain—and I hold that our theologians ought to give it every consideration before offering revised editions of the Christian religion which practically ignore it.

The following comments on emergent evolution, from the fluent pen of a gifted writer, give eloquent expression to much that I have been trying to emphasize :—

"I do not pretend to know whether Professor Lloyd Morgan's opinion is false. For aught I know to the contrary, there may be a Being of infinite power who chooses that children should die of meningitis, and older people of cancer; these things occur, and occur as the result of evolution. If, therefore, evolution embodies a Divine Plan, these occurrences must also have been planned. I have been informed that suffering is sent as a purification for sin, but I find it difficult to think that a child of four

or five years old can sink in such black depths of iniquity as to deserve the punishment that befalls not a few of the children whom our optimistic divines might see any day, if they chose, suffering torments in children's hospitals. Again, I am told that though the child himself may not have sinned very deeply, he deserves to suffer on account of his parents' wickedness. I can only repeat that if this is the Divine sense of justice it differs from mine, and that I think mine superior. If indeed the world in which we live has been produced in accordance with a Plan, we shall have to reckon Nero a saint in comparison with the Author of that Plan. Fortunately, however, the evidence of Divine Purpose is non-existent; so at least one must infer from the fact that no evidence is adduced by those who believe in it. We are, therefore, spared the necessity for that impotent hatred which every brave and humane man would otherwise be called upon to adopt towards the Almighty Tyrant" (*The Scientific Outlook*, pp. 135–6).

CHAPTER II

The Nature of Life. Comparative Mythology. Archæological Discoveries. The Higher Criticism.

The Nature of Life.

DURING the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science held at Cape Town in 1929 I listened to a discussion on the nature of life. I heard the views of Dr. J. S. Haldane, General Smuts, and others, but inadequate time was left for those of Professor Lancelot Hogben. General Smuts was, I think, permitted to exceed the time allowance. This was decidedly annoying for Professor Hogben, and for those who wished to hear the other side, his side, of the question. Fortunately, we can now study his stimulating work, *The Nature of Living Matter* (Kegan Paul, 1930), written before his appointment to the Chair of Social Biology in the Uni-

versity of London. Here, among much else that helps us to understand the mechanistic standpoint, we are shown the importance of Pavlov's discoveries regarding conditioned reflexes. We learn that what Dr. Haldane calls "conscious" behaviour is subject to scientific law, and is no longer, therefore, of use as a theological argument.

Should the pious inquirer, seeking to escape Professor Hogben's conclusions, turn for consolation to those of his opponent in philosophy, General Smuts, he is doomed to disappointment. In the General's *Holism and Evolution* (Macmillan, 1st ed , 1926; 2nd ed., 1927) he will find that, though mechanism is rejected, so also is vitalism. He is asked "to adopt the idea of the whole . . . the more coming out of the less, the something out of the apparent nothing; the higher out of the lower; the complex, more valuable out of the simpler, less valuable." This the orthodox believer is unable to accept. For him, to quote Professor H. Wildon Carr of Los Angeles, a vitalist, when

speaking in the above-mentioned discussion, "life and mind cannot be late-comers; they are there from the first." The vitalist might admit, as Sir Arthur Eddington has, the possibility of a mechanistic theory of life; but, like Eddington again, not of mind and consciousness.

One of the finest refutations of vitalism will be found in the Herbert Spencer lecture delivered at Oxford, June, 1930, by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, C.B.E., F.R.S., D.Sc, LL.D. The pamphlet containing it is entitled *Materialism and Vitalism in Biology*, and it can be obtained at the Clarendon Press, Oxford, or at any bookseller's. In this lecture he puts before his audience the various grounds which satisfy him that "a materialistic monism is more, not less, credible than when Spencer wrote," and he expresses his opinion that "the advance of knowledge has made matter a more probable, not less probable, substratum for life." The following are a few more of his many noteworthy conclusions:—

"Every step in the analysis of living phenomena has been a step towards their resolution into material processes."

"Life, unique, amazing, miraculous in its higher developments, fades down as it is traced through the simpler and simpler forms in which it is associated with simpler and simpler structure, until it passes into a set of processes all familiar in the inorganic world."

"A large part of the structure of the living world is the inevitable consequence of mechanical principles. It neither requires nor can bear the interpretation of having been designed for a purpose, whether the design is to be attributed to a supernatural agency or to a vital principle striving for self-expression. We notice with wonder when the structure fulfils a purpose, and with a pessimistic acceptance when the purpose seems evil. But life abounds with examples of meaningless by-products." (Sir Peter gives some of these examples.)

"A continually increasing set of functions, formerly attributed to some mys-

"We hear a great deal more nowadays about the old-fashioned materialism and its refutation by modern physics." Mr. Russell proceeds to explain how in one sense, and in one sense only, materialism is dead; "but in another and more important sense it is more alive than ever it was. The important question is not whether matter consists of hard little lumps or of something else, but whether the course of nature is determined by the laws of physics. The progress of biology, physiology, and psychology has made it more probable than it ever was before that all natural phenomena are governed by the laws of physics; and this is the really important point." To prove this Mr. Russell then considers some of the dicta of those who deal with the sciences of life.

And this is what Mr. McCabe says:—

"The discoveries of the last twenty years have not in any sense altered the progressive interpretation by science, and on purely scientific lines, of everything that we perceive to exist. In all those branches

of science which bear upon theistic evidence drawn from nature—astronomy, biochemistry, paleontology, prehistoric archæology, ethics, and psychology—all new evidence supports the naturalistic interpretation. . . . All cosmological and teleological arguments for the existence of God are doomed."

In justice to the biologist and the mechanist, and for the edification of the type of man who happens to be metaphysically inclined, I cannot do better than conclude these brief notes on the nature of life by an extract from the mild protest with which Professor T. H. Morgan closes his lectures on the scientific basis of evolution. Speaking of the mechanist, he points out that "he is not pretending to explain the Universe. Mechanists make no such claim. They do claim, however, that science has greatly profited by the use of the mechanistic approach in the widest sense, and they resent the boundaries set to their progress by metaphysicians. The boldest spirits amongst the mechanists go further, and claim that in time they hope

to bring within the reach of their methods a study of the lucubrations, hallucinations, and obsessions of the human mind which, masquerading under the illumination of introspective metaphysics and transcendental philosophy, pretend to solve all the riddles of the Universe."

Comparative Mythology.

Sir James Frazer, the most eminent scholar in the comparative study of primitive superstition and religion, is happily still with us. His classic work *The Golden Bough* (2nd ed., 1900; Vol. XII, 1915; abridged 1922) remains the standard authority on this subject. It is as up to date in 1933 as it was in 1900 in all that is essential for the disclosure of the truth about religion, and the following striking passage from the preface to the second edition still awaits the attention of the religious world :—

"Well handled, it [the comparative study] may become a powerful instrument to

expedite progress if it lays bare certain weak spots in the foundations on which modern society is built—if it shows that much which we are wont to regard as solid rests on the sands of superstition rather than on the rock of nature."

If my readers will kindly turn to page 83 of my book, where I have quoted Sir James Frazer's further observations, they will find that he is of opinion that the destruction of existing religious beliefs by "the battery of the comparative method" is "sooner or later inevitable." Now, there is one shield, and one only, for Christianity and the other supernatural religions against this battery, or, to change the metaphor, but one trench to creep into for protection from the shells and liquid fire of a foe that dares to attack their very origins. It is the theory of a Progressive Revelation.

It was because I thought this question one of extreme importance, and felt sure that the general public were wholly ignorant of it, that I devoted a considerable portion of my chapter on comparative mythology

(Chapter IV) to a somewhat searching investigation of this new theological theory. I have given striking examples of the parallels between the beliefs, teachings, miraculous tales, and rituals of ancient religions and those of the Christian religion, parallels which it is proposed to explain away by this theory. I have shown also that the evolution of the idea of God, and, according to this precious theory, of the idea of His intended revelation of Himself, has been attended by the most hideous customs; by the untold agony, the appalling misery, of countless deluded men and women.

Speaking for myself, the progressive revelation theory is quite unacceptable, if only on account of the age-long suffering which accompanied the "progressive" (!) process. This is according to my personal judgment, and it is for my readers to form theirs after due study of the facts I have brought to their notice. But let me warn them of one thing: there is no half-way house where they may take refuge from the conclusions of Sir James Frazer and of

every unbiassed student of comparative mythology. Sir James, in his allusion to the destruction of beliefs by this science, has said "sooner or later." If it is "later," it will be because comparative mythology is a branch of knowledge of which even highly educated persons are more often than not entirely ignorant. It has not come within their purview. It was not in the curriculum of the schools where they received their education. It has hitherto never been thought to have an educational value; certainly the Churches, which still have a big say in educational matters, have made, and are making, no move, although they should be the first to advocate the wide diffusion of information on comparative mythology if they really believe it affords a convincing proof of God's wish to reveal Himself.

Thus the follower of the Christian or any other world-creed remains totally unaware that the knowledge now in our possession concerning the origin of supernatural religions is such that any further belief in

through priests blowing trumpets of rams' horns and people shouting. (Joshua vi.)

I have mentioned (vide pp. 56 and 68 of my book) that the story of the Deluge is a Hebrew version of the Babylonian epic, and that even conservative theologians admit that the Deluge was not universal in the sense that the waters covered the surface of the entire globe. What does Mr. Woolley himself say? "It seems to me we have at Ur clear evidence of a flood great enough to have drowned out the villages of the non-Sumerian barbarians who made painted pottery. . . . That this flood is identical with that of the Sumerian annals, and so with that of Sumerian legend, can scarcely be doubted; its connection with the affiliated Flood story of Genesis follows; but its real importance is that on the one hand it tends once more to support the credibility of local tradition, and on the other hand goes far to clear up the most perplexing fact in early Mesopotamian archæology, the early prevalence and the complete disappearance of the

painted pottery" (*The Antiquaries Journal*, October 1929, p. 330).[1]

It is not the disappearance of pottery, but of "man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air," with the exception of Noah, his family, and his menagerie, which is of real importance to the searcher for the truth about the Bible. And if the Flood story be the fairy tale that every cultured person in these days, not a fundamentalist, knows it to be, is it not the bounden duty of the ministers of the Christian religion of every denomination to see that our children and an all-too-credulous public are no longer led astray? Is it because Jesus Christ Himself believed this myth (vide Matt. xxiv. 37–9 and Luke xvii. 26–7) that people cannot, must not, be told that the only time the earth was possibly covered by waters would have been after the molten mass whirled from

[1] Interesting references by Sir Arthur Keith to Mr. Woolley's discoveries will be found in Chapter XV of his work, *New Discoveries Relating to the Antiquity of Man* (Williams & Norgate, 1931)

the sun had cooled down enough for the water vapour portion to condense, and that the first life took the form of minute living creatures in these waters? This, and much else, can easily be understood by children and their parents with the help of simple explanations such as those given in *An Outline for Boys and Girls and their Parents* (Gollancz, 1932), edited by Mrs. Naomi Mitchison, daughter of Dr. J. S. Haldane.

Jesus (assuming his historicity), in his quite understandable ignorance, "shared many of the gross superstitions prevalent around him," and "accepted the Scriptures as literally true" (vide p. 81 of my book). He was misled by his teachers; but, being themselves ignorant, they were innocent of any intention to deceive him. The teacher to-day, except for the genuine fundamentalist or the kept-ignorant Catholic, cannot plead this crass ignorance. The fact of the matter is, of course, that, for fear of admitting too much, he deliberately misleads his pupils. The alternative is to resign and join the ranks of the unem-

issued by itself, together with an Epilogue, under the title of *Jesus Christ: An Historical Outline* (Blackie, 1932).

The author, Professor F. C. Burkitt, Norrisian Professor, Cambridge, claims "that our documents, properly read, reveal at least the outline of the features of a real Personality and a real Career." The myth theory, the theory that the Gospel story is not historical but mythical, will be found fully set forth by the late Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson in *A Short History of Christianity* (Watts, 1902), and by Arthur Drews, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy in the Tech. Hochschule, Karlsruhe, in the *Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus*, translated by Joseph McCabe (Watts, 1912). According to Professor Burkitt, the best refutation of the myth theory is given in *The Historical Christ* by F. C. Conybeare (Watts, 1914). But, while the learned are at variance, I and my fellow truth-searchers would stress a single query that is vital: Is there a portion of the story that both sides agree is undoubtedly mythical? The

answer to be found in these works is that there is such a portion, and it is that very portion which must be historical if the Christian Faith is to survive.

Professor Burkitt's interesting little book, costing only *2s. 6d.*, is one of the latest additions to apologetic literature, and seems to me peculiarly confirmatory of unbelief: a book to convert the half-believer into a whole unbeliever. He may have read, let us say, F. C. Conybeare's devastating *Myth, Magic, and Morals* (Watts, 1909), and have been most unwilling to accept the conclusions of Chapter XV, which leave him nothing to cling to and enable him to call himself a Christian. Then he lights upon Professor Burkitt's book, and turns to read it with an anticipatory sigh of relief, only to find that the impossibility of further belief in the dogmas of Christianity is unintentionally, and therefore all the more convincingly, made manifest. The treatise may be considered by some to prove successfully that Jesus was a real person; but, at the same time, it admits

that the author of St. Mark was Peter's interpreter (apparently the gift of tongues at Pentecost was withdrawn!), that he wrote after Peter's death and some thirty years after the Crucifixion, and, finally, that this gospel is, nevertheless, not only "a primary source of the other gospels," but the only one that can be treated with respect "as a serious historical document in itself."

When concluding the Epilogue defending his views the Professor says: "I regard the framework of the Gospel of Mark as based upon much the same authority as the contents—that is to say, on reminiscences more or less faithful." But he adds: "Between us and the events themselves there is no doubt a medium, a veil, made up (to put it bluntly) of twenty-four or thirty years of St. Peter's experiences as a Christian Apostle."

The Gospel according to St. Mark also contains, as the Professor helps us to notice, fewer of those wonder tales which in these days must have some natural

explanation or else be treated as legends. In the opinion of the learned Professor, "without Mark there could have been no Matthew." If the latter "does make an addition, it is of a wonder and a marvel, like the earthquake at the moment when Jesus died." We need not wonder why "the Gospel of Matthew is the most quoted in early times" and "the Gospel of Mark the least quoted," for the early Christians "wanted the deeds of Christ to be miracle and yet more miracle," and "the wonder is they invented so little."

Our attention is called to that very human cry of despair, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" as being one of the strong arguments against a mythical Jesus. The Professor continues: "The ancient text of Mark current in the West is even more poignant, for it makes Jesus say, 'Why dost Thou put me to shame?' If this word, either in the Western or the ordinary form, had not been enshrined in canonical Scriptures, and it had turned up for the first time in a papyrus from Oxy-

rynchus, with what emotion it would have been read! Now, people would have said, we are hearing the truth! Surely it is only familiarity with the picture that prevents us from being moved by the agony of the cry, and astonished at the fidelity of the biographer!"

This point and much else adduced by Professor Burkitt might bring even a Freethinker to agree with him when he says: "I do not claim, I do not wish to claim, that this (the Marcan) narrative is not a strange and wonderful story. But I do venture to claim that it is a story, a tale with a beginning, a middle and an end." It should be understood that the Professor does not claim that the "wonder" portions of the tale are true. On the contrary, when writing, for instance, about the Feeding of the Five Thousand, he confesses that "the tale as told in Mark is incredible." The "wonders," as I have above noted, have to be capable of a natural explanation.

I have mentioned (p. 71 of my book) the

admission even by many orthodox apologists that "St. Mark really ends at xvi 8," the sentences which follow being interpolations. Professor Burkitt also mentions that "our text of Mark breaks off in the middle of the strange tale of how they failed to find what they were looking for." Elsewhere the Professor says plainly: "The extra 'historical' additions to the narrative of Mark in Matthew, such as the guard at the tomb, seem, I confess, simply legendary." And again, he admits, "the surviving traditions of these appearances of Jesus are confused and contradictory: there can be little doubt that there is an element of unhistorical legend, and even fancy, in some of the tales, notably those which are located in Galilee." We should note here that "Galilee never became a Christian country; it is not a Christian country to-day." But what the Professor does not and I do wish to emphasize is that Mark, the only evangelist whom, it seems, we may credit with at least trying to relate a true tale, *gives us no account of*

the resurrection, the subsequent appearances, and the ascension of Jesus!

Although it is not of the same supreme importance, I think we might notice, before leaving Mark, that he also makes no mention of the Virgin Birth, the Lord's Prayer, or the Sermon on the Mount!

In *The Churches and Modern Thought* I have brought to notice how a book called *Supernatural Religion* caused such a flutter in the theological dovecots that it drew a volume from a Bishop which purported to be a reply, and how this reply was supposed to have made mincemeat of the offending treatise, although the supremely important portion of it—the portion dealing with the fundamental miracles—had been left entirely unmentioned.

The same evasion of crucial criticism continues. There is a work of recent date conspicuous for its thoroughness in the examination of the resurrection story—namely, *The Resurrection Doctrines*, by Jocelyn Rhys (Watts, 1924). Has any reply to this book appeared either in

writing or from the pulpit? Of course not; nor will any popular journal with a large circulation dare to recommend its perusal. A prurient sex novel or a crime-suggestive detective story has a much better chance of introduction to the public.[1]

What is the plain man to think about all this suppression of the truth? The "unemployed highly-skilled worker" who told his story to the *Daily Express* (vide August 23, 1933) was nearer the truth than perhaps he himself suspected when he said: "Show me a worker who uses his head, and I'll show you a man who has no use for the Churches." I maintain that my appeal for candour is warranted now more than ever.

[1] Another recent work to which a reply should be forthcoming, though its cost is only a humble two shillings, is *The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus*, by W. A Campbell, with Preface by the Rt. Hon. John M. Robertson (Pioneer Press, 1933).

CHAPTER III

The Faith of the Modern Churchman.

WHEN as a young man I consulted my godfather regarding my religious doubts, he introduced me to his friend Dr. Gore, at that time Master of Pusey House. The interview left me thinking more furiously than ever. It was not so much the probability of error in the Old Testament which was troubling me as the possibility of it in the New. From what took place between us I discovered that I was not to expect my doubts to be overcome by argument and discussion, but only by prayer and faith.

Bishop Gore, the author of *Lux Mundi*, while admitting the unsatisfactory character of the Old Testament, and also the limitations of Christ's knowledge, always required his clergy to assent to the

miracles in the Creed in their literal sense. Even with regard to the Virgin Birth, which so many outside the Church of Rome now acknowledge to be legendary, we learn from Dean Inge that Bishop Gore "has not spared to stigmatize as morally dishonest those who desire to serve the Church as its ministers while harbouring doubts about the physical miracle known as the Virgin Birth" (*Outspoken Essays*, by Dean Inge, pp. 119–20 of the 12th impression; Longmans, Green, & Co., 1924). Thus the late Bishop Gore was never one of those clerics who affirm their belief in doctrines which they do not really believe in their original sense; who think they are getting over the difficulty of a creed being out of date and repugnant by having it sung instead of said. He did not use expressions from the pulpit or in his other public utterances to which he inwardly assigned a meaning other than the literal one. There was no need for mental reservations when repeating the creeds, and all this because, it seems, the prayers which

failed with me succeeded with him. When we take into consideration his conspicuous intellect and integrity, a result such as this from prayer furnishes us with a truly remarkable illustration of the marvels of auto-suggestion.

The late Right Reverend Charles Gore, who would probably have been refused ordination seventy years ago—when *Essays and Reviews*, and even Colenso's writings on the Pentateuch, could cause a shock—on the ground of his lax views on inspiration, never arrived at the revised teaching of the Christian faith as expounded by its latest defenders. This new teaching will be found well set forth in the works of Dean Inge, Bishop Barnes, and Canon Streeter. Of these I am selecting for comment *Outspoken Essays*, by William Ralph Inge, C.V.O., D.D., F.B.A., Dean of St. Paul's, already referred to; *Things New and Old*, being sermons and addresses in Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, January 28 to February 5, 1933, also by Dean Inge (Longmans, Green, and Co.); *Should Such a Faith Offend*, by

Ernest William Barnes, Sc.D. Camb., Hon. D.D. Aber. & Edin., Hon. LL.D. Glas., F.R.S , Bishop of Birmingham (Hodder and Stoughton, 1930); *The Buddha and the Christ,* an exploration of the meaning of the universe and of the purpose of human life, being the Bampton Lecture for 1932, by Burnett Hillman Streeter, Reader in Christian Origins, Oxford University; Fellow and Lecturer of Queen's College, Oxford; Canon of Hereford, Fellow of the British Academy, Hon. D.D. Edin., Dur., Man. (Macmillan and Co., 1932). To these we may add *Rationalism and Orthodoxy of To-day,* an essay in Christian philosophy, by J. H. Beibitz, Vicar of All Saints, Warwick, Hon. Canon of Coventry, Examining Chaplain to the Lord Bishop of Coventry, some time Vice-Principal of the Theological College, Lichfield (London, Student Christian Movement, 32 Russell Square, W.C.1, 1927).

"What we need," Bishop Gore used to urge, "is a Christian philosophy . . . a philosophy thought out afresh to-day in

the light of modern knowledge." Well, we now have that philosophy; but whether the plain man, whether the millions of Christendom, can be expected to comprehend and accept it is another story. The following are some notes on it:—

Things New and Old, though published only recently, has already a wide circle of readers. For not too critical folk anxious to hold on as much as possible to the faith of their forefathers, the faith they imbibed in their childhood, the faith they suppose—they do not ascertain—of their friends and relations, here is the book which answers their requirements. This and the Dean's lecture on Science and Ultimate Truth, which I am referring to later, are well worth the study of the Religionist or the Rationalist who wishes for an outline of the philosophy which is to save the Christian religion. The Dean candidly admits that "the revolt against Christianity is louder and more confident than ever." Also, with equal candour, when alluding to the grounds of belief which seem to him valid, he

remarks: "They may not be good: my beliefs may have irrational or sentimental foundations which I have not explored myself." He will pardon me, therefore, and it may assist him in his explorations, if I try to indicate where a Rationalist finds his beliefs to have irrational or sentimental foundations.

One of the most essential questions for consideration is what is called Value. Not only the Dean, but all the theologians who are furnishing us with an interpretation of the Christian religion which claims to be in line with modern knowledge, insist on Values. They are the corner-stone of the new structure. Some idea of what we are to understand by "Values" may be gathered from the following excerpts from *Things New and Old*, and from passages I am quoting later from other books:—

"The real world is, in modern language, a kingdom of Values."

According to "the best modern thinkers," we are to "accept the existence of intrinsic or absolute values of a different order from

sensuous existences, not less real than they, and given to us as facts of knowledge."

Love of God "means partly homage to those eternal attributes of God of which I have spoken—Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, the setting of our affections on things above, but also a much more personal emotion of loyalty and gratitude to our Heavenly Father."

"Our love of God proceeds from God, who brings his very life into the soul of man and receives it back as His own. Our love of the good, the true, and the beautiful is united and harmonized in the love of Him Who is the source and the end of them all. And this love is essentially reciprocal."

"We love Him because He first loved us. This is the heart of Christianity and the source of the peace and joy which the religious mind feels in the midst of all the disquietude of the world."

"For Plato, and for the most thoughtful Christians, eternal life is life above time and space."

" Eternity has become incarnate in time, and is already the atmosphere which the spiritual man breathes."

" Faith in human immortality stands or falls with the belief in *absolute values*" (*Outspoken Essays*, p. 270).

Some of my readers may know the story of the old Scotch wife who was quite sure of her own salvation but ne'er so sure about Jock's. Also I have heard—to tell a true tale about one of my own sex—of an old farm-hand in Hertfordshire who was terribly anxious to outlive his wife, for fear she might be buried on top of him and interfere with *his* resurrection. I am presuming that the modern churchman who has evolved this new philosophy of salvation has done so, not in the spirit of these egoists, for the sake of himself and a few of the elect, but for the benefit of the whole of humanity. I am presuming also that he is not attaching any importance to verses 11 and 12, Chapter iv, of Mark, where his Master is reported to have said, " Unto you it is given to know

the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."

Does Dean Inge really suppose that any appreciable portion of Christendom are going to understand and enthuse over a religion so hazy and speculative, especially when compared with the quite simple and definite teaching expounded by Christ according to the synoptic gospels? Does he think that those who hope for a future life will feel better assured of it and of its being worth having? He says elsewhere: "The study of mysticism forbids us to disparage religious ecstasy"; that "we have most of us felt the presence of God"; and that the natural language of devotion is poetry. . . . "I say to you all read good poetry." Why, may I ask, duly remembering the man who happens not to have the temperament of a mystic or a special pre-

dilection for poetry, should mystics and lovers of poetry get a better chance of salvation than their fellows, the vast majority? Again—and this is an exceedingly serious point—the Dean says: "There is no warrant for the belief that those who while on earth have driven the Holy Spirit away from their hearts will ever be admitted to the presence of God. Let us serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire! *We must not eliminate fear from our religion!*" (Italics are mine.)

Fear! Here is the cloven hoof of ancient priestcraft protruding from under the graceful robes of a more humane philosophy. Is the Dean, after all, so far removed from Dr. Pusey and the ten thousand clergymen who signed the famous manifesto of 1860, of which the closing words proclaimed that the canonical Scripture "teaches, in the words of our blessed Lord, that the 'punishment' of the 'cursed' equally with the 'life' of the righteous is everlasting"? We may recognize that Dean Inge is striving

to reinterpret Christianity in more rational and kindly terms; but we cannot be blind to the fact that, for all his verbal skill and cultural distinction, he is held in bondage by the grim, uncompromising words of the "Saviour" which consign the "wicked" to "be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." We observe that the modern churchman has veiled with politic reticence and vague verbiage the crude savagery of the Saviour's hell, but we cannot disguise from ourselves the essential harshness and wastefulness of Dean Inge's dispensation, whereby teeming millions of mankind are relegated to hopeless and eternal failure.

Fear! "When the debt which humanity owes to science comes to be reckoned, the greatest part of it will be found to be the deliverance from fear." This expression of the opinion of Rationalism appears on page 148 of that admirable work by A. Gowans Whyte entitled *The Religion of the Open Mind.* To quote Eden Phillpotts in his Foreword to it, "One may well hope

that these temperate pages will help to make men brave, quicken thought along scientific lines, and play their part to abolish dualism—superstition's ghostly shadow—which would still irrationally divide 'flesh' and 'spirit,' ignore their relationship, and deny their common ancestry and material dominion."

We observe also that Dean Inge's revised Christianity is as helpless as any obsolete system of theology in dealing with the time-honoured problem of evil. In fact, in view of the disappearance of Satan, the Dean's position is even more untenable than that of his predecessors who made a scapegoat of God's supposed opponent. To those determined not to entertain a disturbing thought, it will be pleasant to learn that the modern churchman ascribes to God the attributes of absolute Goodness, Truth, and Beauty; but this assertion has no weight with those who bear in mind all the Evil, Falsehood, and Ugliness which torture the lot of man. We search in vain in the works of Dean Inge and other modern

churchmen for an adequate retort to that cry—I drew attention to it in my book—of the Rationalist poet of by-gone days:—

> Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth did'st make,
> And who with Eden did'st devise the Snake;
> For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
> Is blacken'd, Man's forgiveness give—and take!

The pamphlet giving the Dean's lecture on *Science and Ultimate Truth* costs 1s. only, and I recommend its perusal to anyone caring for further details of the "eternal values," and of the part they play in the revised religion now offered us. Dean Inge tells us in this lecture that we can "find in our earthly experience the sure traces of eternal values which, independently of time, independently of the sequence of events, have a being in themselves, or in the mind of the Supreme Being in whom all things consist, and which, accordingly, are not only the ever-receding goal of an historical process." . . . "He has revealed Himself under the three attributes of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. These eternal and ultimate Values are not inactive

thoughts; they necessarily produce an eternal world—a sphere of spaceless and timeless existence—in which they live. This is the heaven of the Christian, the intelligible (or spiritual) world of the Platonist. . . . In the apprehension of these eternal values, and in earnest striving to co-operate with the divine will in actualizing them, lies the whole duty of man, and the path by which he can claim his status in the eternal world" (*Science and Ultimate Truth;* Longmans, Green, & Co., 1926).

What, it may be asked, would be the reply of a Rationalist to this twentieth-century conception of revealed religion, this doctrine of Values? His reply might start with some indignation: We militant Rationalists are inspired, as, indeed, you are well aware, with that very love of the good and the true and the beautiful. We are conspicuously entitled, therefore—according to you—to this status in the eternal world. You have no right to imply that we are not guided by the same high motive you claim for yourself, and you should be thoroughly

ashamed of those fellow Christians of yours who repeat the parrot-cry of the crafty priest. I mean, of course, the cry that we use our intellect to furnish reasons for conduct previously determined by our passions, or, in other words, that we seek excuses for being wicked.

Our Rationalist could then continue his reply with the following quotation from the notable lecture delivered by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, to which I have already had occasion to refer: "Historical parallels are dangerous, but there is a curious analogy between two periods separated by about a century. The last quarter of the eighteenth century and the Napoleonic wars of the beginning of the nineteenth were followed by a revulsion from science to easier ways of thinking, a revulsion showing itself, as described in the undying pages of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, in a plague of esoteric and mystical doctrine. The last quarter of the nineteenth century and the Great War of the twentieth have been followed by a similar outcrop affecting men

of science and laymen. It appears in many guises, but in none more beguiling than the pragmatical effort to load the dice of scientific data with emotional prepossessions. The polite name for this illusion is the doctrine of Values, that somehow or other you must assign marks of merit to your data or your inferences in accordance with your judgments of worth. But this practice befogs science with the subjective, intuitive, emotional element, the absence of which has hitherto been its exclusive privilege"

A reply in brief might be: "All the discoveries that have enriched civilization have, without one single exception, been arrived at via the mechanistic and deterministic method of approach, while *Idealism has ever been the clogging fog of obscurantism*" (Surgeon Rear-Admiral Beadnell, in his review of *The New Background of Science*, to which I have already called attention).

I have now stated some of the reasons compelling a Rationalist to reject this new presentation of the Christian belief; but

I willingly acknowledge it to be an improvement on that of the last nineteen centuries. Compare, for instance, its ethical urge with the methods of the Roman Catholic Church in Southern Italy, which, as noted on p. 175 of my book, remind one of what Pascal tells us concerning the Jesuits—how they kept men wicked lest, if they became virtuous, the priests should lose their hold on them. With the modern churchman, conduct not creed takes the first place in his scheme of salvation.

Again, the shedding of many superstitions permits it (the new faith) to be on the side of progress, and we find Dean Inge a strenuous advocate, for instance, of birth control (vide pp. 59–81 of *Outspoken Essays*). At the Modern Churchmen's Conference in Cambridge recently (August 23, 1933) we notice the Rural Dean of Sutton Coldfield, the Rev. G. L. H. Harvey, descanting on the Church's failure to give a lead not only in this matter, but also in the reform of the divorce laws. His reference to birth control is worth quoting here, as incidentally he

introduces, to emphasize his argument, yet another failure which is now history, but which I have never seen whole-heartedly acknowledged by the Church. He said: "We are no more likely to-day to receive an effective authoritative lead on birth control from any ecclesiastical body than were men who, a century ago, fought for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade."

In the Indian census report for the year 1933 the commissioner, Dr. Hutton, urges birth control for India. The limitation of families is banned, it is true, by the Hindu religion; but the intelligentzia are faced with the fact that India heads all countries in population, her increase of thirty-four million since 1921 placing her ahead even of China. The steps taken to reduce the high infantile mortality, dictated by common humanity and reason, should have been and should now be accompanied by birth-control instruction. It is irrational to oppose the crude forces of Nature in one direction, only thereby to increase the likelihood of their bursting out again in

other directions such as war, famine, and pestilence. We have recently had, in the loss of life from the Yellow River floods, an illustration of one of Nature's inexorable ways of keeping down population. The official estimate is fifty thousand Chinese drowned, a million starving, and two million affected. Parents were giving away their children in the hope of saving their lives during the approaching winter.

And once again the faith of the Modern Churchman appears to me to converge towards Unitarianism, a religion which could never, in my opinion, be guilty of religious persecution; a religion similar to the Brahmo-Samaj, which, were it adopted as their universal religion by the inhabitants of India, would largely conduce to the solution of problems in that quarter of the globe; a religion which, in many important aspects of its mental attitude and teaching, is the twin brother of Rationalism.

"Crumbs of comfort"? Yes, indeed, for the *Rationalist*.

The modern churchman claims, I under-

stand, that he is not entirely in agreement with the Modernist, as the Rationalist and many others understand that term, and certainly not with the Roman Catholic modernist as represented by M. Loisy—crushed of course by the Pope, became agnostic, and formally left the church some years before he died—who, in *Les Evangiles Synoptiques*, portrays Jesus as a deluded enthusiast. It is not quite clear, however, in what way he wishes us to regard the fundamental miracles. The miraculous birth, resurrection, and ascension are left—as Jesus was in the event last mentioned—somewhere in the air. In any case, it seems, they are not to be taken literally, as in the creeds.

The following quotations will, I hope, give at least some little insight into the opinions of the modern churchman on this and other matters of interest. My comments must be somewhat abrupt at times, as I have already exceeded the space I had set apart for the examination of these recent additions to Christian theology.

Dean Inge says: "To most educated men there would be no difficulty in believing that the Son of God became incarnate through the agency of two earthly parents" (*Outspoken Essays*, p. 122).

"Those who believe in the divinity of Christ, but not in His supernatural birth and bodily resurrection, do not, as a rule, make those miracles the subject of their meditations, but find their spiritual sustenance in communion with the Christ who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (idem, p. 161). Obviously these disillusioned believers would cease to meditate on miracles they no longer believed in, and would turn for "spiritual sustenance" elsewhere; but I have my doubts whether the bulk of them would continue to believe in the divinity of Christ. Yet, according to the Dean, "the divinity of Christ implies —one might almost say it means—the eternal supremacy of those moral qualities which He exhibited in their perfection" (idem, p. 135). As the assumption of the sinlessness of Jesus looms so largely in the

creed of the modern churchman, I am later on examining it.

"The primary evidence for the truth of religion is religious experience, which in persons of religious genius—those whom the Church calls saints and prophets—includes a clear perception of an eternal world of truth, beauty, and goodness, surrounding us and penetrating us at every point" (idem, p. 231). But in what manner, except in degree, does a "clear perception" of this kind differ from the feeling of illumination and exaltation so often experienced by sufferers from mental disorder; or, indeed, from that of the poor lunatic quite sure he or she is the King or Queen of Siam or, if suffering from religious mania, the Messiah or the Virgin? The question is of importance, in that many of the world's greatest revivalists, from Paul to Luther and Wesley, have been visionaries.

At the present moment there is a revivalism much in evidence which owes its origin to a "religious experience." I refer, of course, to Buchmanism. Dr. Frank Buch-

man had—so he claims—a spiritual experience twenty years ago and later he brought the idea to Oxford, thus starting the "Oxford Group" movement. Dean Inge surely shares the opinion of Dr. Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham, that "the darkest shadow on the movement is the trail of moral and intellectual wrecks which its progress leaves behind." Yet he asks us to put our trust in these self-same religious experiences!

One can but agree and sympathize with the undergraduates of Oxford when they say: "For such a movement, a movement which has no regard for intellect or good taste . . . a movement, moreover, which, with the exception of a psychologist, a chaplain or two, and a handful of weak-willed undergraduates, has absolutely no membership within the University, coolly to prefix 'Oxford' to its name is a piece of the most unparalleled effrontery that we have ever encountered . . . Oxford is not responsible, nor ever has been, for the depraved antics of these spiritual

exhibitionists." (*The Isis*, October 11, 1933.)

I have stated what I believe to be the truth of the matter in the section on religious experience, pp. 179–88 of *The Churches and Modern Thought* (Thinker's Library edition).

Bishop Barnes says: "The greatest and most authentic of early Christian teachers [he refers to St. Paul and St. John the Evangelist] did not think that belief in the Virgin Birth was essential to the doctrine of the Incarnation" (*Should Such a Faith Offend?*, p. 151). The Bishop forgets to mention that in order to make sure of converts it became necessary later on to incorporate the world-wide and age-long myth of virgin-born Saviours.

"The Fundamentalist, like the Catholic, insists on the truth of the Virgin Birth, and of the physical resurrection and ascension of Christ" (idem, p. 161).

"The idea of the resurrection of the flesh could only be entertained so long as the truths of chemistry were unknown"

(idem, p. 89). I should be interested to learn the Bishop's explanation of the stories in the gospel about the empty tomb. Are we to understand that these were pious frauds, interpolated to bear out the then useful legend of Jesus's bodily resurrection?

"Take the theory of the Atonement. St. Augustine countenances the idea that it was a ransom paid by Christ to the Devil. The belief dominated Western theology for nearly a thousand years. To those who accept Christ's teaching as to love and power of God such a notion is intolerable, repugnant alike to reason and common sense" (idem, p. 117). The Rationalist agrees with Bishop Barnes in his condemnation, and admires his courage in proclaiming it; but he cannot help noticing that, just as in the case of the facts of evolution and the facts of "progressive" revelation, so here in the case of Christ's teaching he seems to have a blind eye ready to turn towards those portions of it which are intolerable and repugnant alike to reason and common sense.

"Clearly, it is our stern duty to preserve and strengthen the great Christian tradition to which we are pledged. I take it that we must be, in some sense, Modernists; that is to say, we must not be content merely to avoid harsh contrasts between new knowledge and old beliefs. We must, in fact, have a really coherent system of religious thought. . . . Christ Himself should be our example. He had a powerful and coherent theology, and He expounded it in language of matchless beauty and utter simplicity." (idem, pp. 166–7). [Presumably this, then, is the position of the modern churchman.]

"I have at times heard sermons in Congregational churches in which a vague pantheism, or the entire absence of the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, has sent me away with a sort of weary chill. If this is all we can continue to offer men, so my thoughts have run, then I must be a Fundamentalist. I need a God, Who is our Father, Who rules the world and loves men with a father's love" (idem, p. 167). Rationalists reared in the

Christian tradition may have gone through the same weary chill, and may have felt, and may still feel, that if there be a God he should be all that the Bishop tells us he needs; but, on finding the absence of a sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, they have never dreamt of hoodwinking themselves into seeking asylum among those who remain or pretend to remain ignorant of the truth.

"The progressive revelation of spiritual truth which is an essential element of the divinely-guided evolution of humanity is one with the revelation which came in and through Jesus" (idem, p. 135). Bishop Barnes accepts, therefore, the new theory of a progressive revelation, on which I have animadverted.

"Yet we have seen, felt, known the presence of God" (idem, p. 221). In Bishop Barnes's latest work, *Scientific Theory and Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 1933), he again shows his sympathy with the mystics. This is only natural, for he relates how he has himself experienced

on several occasions certain mystical thrills or exaltations, which he believes to be of supreme significance. Einstein is a musician. He plays the violin most beautifully. The thrills he experiences sometimes start ideas of importance to him in his work. Do his thrills and the Bishop's thrills really differ? I, too, get thrills from music, stirring up memories and ideas, and taking me out of myself, as it were. I can vouch for them being without a vestige of the mystical; but would not a psychologist tell us that they were of exactly the same nature at their basis as the Bishop's?

It is curious how few people take adequate account of the existence of the mystic element in human nature. Thus, a Freethinker may experience a difficulty in believing that a person who clings to a superstition can be at once well-informed and intellectually honest. The only excuse he can think of, or at least give any weight to, is ignorance. One catches a glimpse of this manner of thinking in Colonel Ingersoll's famous reply to Cardinal Manning, entitled

Rome or Reason? (issued for the Secular Society by the Pioneer Press and obtainable for 3*d.*). It appears in the following passage: "There never was, there never can be, a miracle. We know that man is a conditioned being. We know that he is affected by a change of conditions. If he is ignorant, he is superstitious; that is natural. If his brain is developed, if he perceives clearly that all things are naturally produced, he ceases to be superstitious and becomes scientific. He is not a saint, but a savant—not a priest, but a philosopher. He does not worship, he works; he investigates; he thinks; he takes advantage, through intelligence, of the forces of nature. He is no longer the victim of appearances, the dupe of his own ignorance, and the persecutor of his fellow men."

While this passage is admirably to the point in every other respect, the special case of the mystically-minded individual remains unnoticed. Ignorance—it may be simply of the true history of religions—is, of course, the chief cause of superstition;

but it is not necessarily the sole cause, and certainly it would be incorrect always to attribute the retention of a superstition to lack of knowledge or to what one generally understands by the term "an undeveloped brain." Mysticism may be present and in full force. The potential tendency to have this kink may, perhaps, be virtually universal The creepy feeling of the child in the dark, confirmed perhaps by weird nightmares, is an example of the presence of the tendency at the start of life. Should this "creepiness," however, be pronounced, the seed of mysticism will have fallen on suitable soil and will require only conditions distinctly favourable for its growth to produce the phenomenon of the mystic. It matters not whether mysticism owes its origin mainly to heredity or to environment, the effect is the same. However well-informed and highly developed a brain may be, it can, so to speak, become locally paralysed and for this reason alone unable to perceive clearly that all things are naturally produced.

Regarding the problem of evil, Bishop Barnes admits that it "is an *impasse*, the most impenetrable of all the barriers which man tries to pierce by speculative inquiry." He admits also that "we cannot postulate two gods, for the cosmic process is plainly a unity," and "we cannot believe that God is morally inert." Yet, so overwhelming is the mystical side of his nature—at least, that is my explanation for what otherwise is inexplicable—that he is able confidently to affirm, "The end of His plan, as we can see it, is the emergence of ethical Values" (idem, pp. 293–4). Surely it is Jesuitry to commit or permit evil that alleged good may come of it? If the Power responsible for the evolutionary plan be personal, we may suppose Him to be unmoral, *i.e.* "morally inert," not immoral; but confidently to assume Him to be moral, to have devoted His supreme intelligence to "the emergence of ethical Values," is to fly in the face of facts.

Canon Streeter says: "The historic starting point of Christianity was not the Cross,

but the conviction that Christ had risen—a conviction, I would affirm, which in no way involves acceptance of belief in the resurrection of the physical body of the Master" (*The Buddha and the Christ*, p. 226). The Canon should have mentioned at the same time, I repeat, that it was the conviction of the *bodily* resurrection, and only this conviction, which in the early days of Christianity, not to mention the later, gave the impetus and brought in converts to the new religion. There are, I venture to say, two events which, had they happened, would have prevented all chance of Christianity ever becoming one of the world religions. One, if the epileptic Saul (who is also called Paul) of Tarsus had met his death, as he so nearly did, at Damascus, when, after his "religious experience," "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." The other, if Christian theologians of those days had held forth like some of our modern theologians on the absurdity of a bodily resurrection. The idea of the resurrection of the spirit of

a man was no new thing. It was that of the body which convinced and made Christians, and indeed still continues to be the convincing factor.

Consider how we are told :—"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do reasonings arise in your heart? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having. And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish. And he took it, and did eat before them" (Luke xxiv, 37–43). This is read in every church of the Church of England on Tuesday in Easter-Week.

Or, again :—"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples

therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John xx, 24–8).

Consider, too, the words of the prophet Job:—"But I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth: and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God" (Job xix, 25–6). This is read at every burial service.

How does Canon Streeter reconcile his teaching with that of the Bible? Is it not evident that belief in the resurrection of the

physical body of Christ must have been a veritable *sine qua non* for the propagation of the Christian religion?

Hon. Canon Beibitz says: "The point which concerns us here is that the whole Christian movement began with, and depended upon, the conviction that the Lord had in fact risen. Christian experience is an illusion if this central conviction be untrue. The nature of the appearances and of the risen Body of the Lord are *secondary* problems" (*Rationalism and Orthodoxy of To-day*, p. 149). (Italics are mine.) The "vulgar" (vide p. 30 of *Things New and Old*) Rationalist, on the other hand, finds this to be the primary problem—very much so, indeed—and he asks why Peter never told his interpreter Mark anything at all about these appearances, and why, as I have already mentioned, serious and scholarly studies of the Resurrection problem, such as *Supernatural Religion*, published two generations ago, and the *Resurrection Doctrines*, recently published, still remain totally ignored by the

Churches' apologists? The answer is, of course, that they are "dangerous" books. Another in this category is Macleod Yearsley's *The Story of the Bible*, a work full of interest and reliable information. As, however, it is now available in the Thinker's Library series, and as nowadays there are quite a number of the more serious-minded who wish to know the whole story of the Bible, the policy of Silence will be less successful.

To return to Dean Inge. As posited by him, the superstructure of the Christian Faith is supported on three main pillars: Religious Experience, Values, and the Divinity of Jesus. With regard to the last, the divinity of Jesus, it should be understood that the modern churchman is sceptical concerning the miracles related in the gospels, and admits also that Jesus displayed the ignorance of the ordinary mortal of his time and environment (and consequently believed in his immediate reappearance from the skies as the long-looked-for Messiah, in the possibility of that event being heralded by stars falling

from heaven, in persons being possessed with devils, in all the absurd legends and merciless teaching of the Jewish scriptures, and, most direful of all, in the monstrous doctrine of eternal torture in a furnace of fire). But he maintains the divinity of Jesus to be established by his sinlessness.

Of these three pillars, "religious experience" has been examined in my book, and "values" in this addendum to it. The dogma of "sinlessness" has also been briefly commented upon in my book; but now that it plays such an important rôle—it is almost the one and only proof of Jesus's divinity—I am offering some further observations. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that the figure of Jesus is not wholly an invention of priestcraft, and that we can rely on the Gospel accounts for our record of his personal conduct, the question is, What do we really know about his life? That Jesus during his brief ministry showed at times imperfections of character is apparently not admitted by the modern churchman. The rationalistic, the seem-

ingly common-sense point of view to the contrary, will be found clearly and concisely expressed in Mr. Bertrand Russell's *Why I am not a Christian* (first published 1927, Watts). Personally I find the sayings attributed to Jesus, amid much that is otherwise admirable, contain platitudes, impossible idealism, and contradictions, while, now and then, they exhibit irritability, intolerance, and even positive inhumanity.

Let us, however, consider all this to be an open question, and confine ourselves to one which is not so. We are told nothing in the gospels concerning the previous, the major portion of the life of Jesus, bar the incident of his rudeness to his parents; nothing to assure us that he never had a naughty thought or did a naughty thing from babyhood to the age of thirty. I take no account, of course, of apocryphal writings, as they are excluded from the Canon. The early life of many another great teacher of the past is known to some extent—in the case of Sakyamuni the Buddha, though

the documents are just as late, the incidents are at least probable—but where, having regard to the truth of the Christian belief, a record of it was of incalculable importance, there is *none at all!*

Our ignorance concerning the main portion of Jesus's life was impressed upon me recently when perusing *The Jesus of History*, which has a foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury commending it with confidence. The copy I have is the twenty-first impression, September, 1931, completing 110,000 copies, and it is published by the Student Christian Movement Press. The author, T. R. Glover, informs the reader that "this book has grown out of lectures upon the historical Jesus given in a good many cities of India during the winter 1915–16." The chapter on "Childhood and Youth," where the evident possession by the author of a lively imagination has full play, commences: "It has been remarked as an odd thing by some readers that the gospels tell us so little of the childhood of Jesus. . . . The writers of the

Apocryphal Gospels did their best to fill the gap by inventing or developing stories, pretty, silly, or repellent, which only show how little they understood the original gospels or the character of Jesus"

Mr. Glover then proceeds "to fill the gap" with some fancies of his own. One of these is in connection with the fact that "Nazareth lies in a basin among hills"—I should describe it, from my recollection of it, as "perched on a plateau partially surrounded by hills"—"from the rim of which can be seen to the southward the historic plain of Esdraelon, and eastward the Jordan valley and the hills of Gilead, and westward the Mediterranean"—and, he should have added, "northward the mountains of Lebanon with Mt. Hermon." Starting with this picture, and assuming that there must have been "great roads" full of "many-coloured traffic," which could be seen from the rim, and which would have "formed a panorama of life for a thoughtful and imaginative boy," and assuming also that "it would be hard to believe that a bright,

quick boy, with genius in him, with poetry in him, with feeling for the real and for life, never went down to the road, never walked alongside of the caravan and took note of the strange people"—assuming all these things, he discovers that some of the sayings of Jesus according to the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke indicate the impression that these sights had on him as a boy.

Now, when I once stood on this rim and admired the view, the sight which arrested my attention and stirred my sense of the beautiful, and which would appeal also to Mr. Glover or anyone who visited the spot, was snow-clad Mt. Hermon. (A few days previously I had caught sight of it as a white speck on the northern horizon when commencing the descent to Jericho, and it had helped me to realize the insignificant area of Palestine.) The thought which occurred to me was: "If Jesus were indeed an historical figure and this his home, how often would he not have clambered up here, as a child, as a lad, as a young man, to enjoy the fresh air and the view, and have then been impressed,

just as I am, by this beautiful peep of Mt. Hermon. Certainly there should have been some reference to the mountain in his sayings."

I am not claiming that these ruminations of mine are any more reasonable than Mr. Glover's, though I may think they are; but I submit that contemplations on a natural feature of Nazareth leading to such diverse conclusions serve to expose the folly of pretending to construct a life of Christ on flights of imagination. Had we a record of just what Jesus's parents and townsfolk thought of his behaviour from childhood upwards till his departure on his self-imposed mission, it might be enlightening.

I repeat, we know far too little of the life of Jesus to assume that he was sinless, and to found thereupon the doctrine of his divinity.

Each prophet has his plan, and they who mould
And trim and fashion, dock and dress and change,
Deny all gods save Him their wit hath made,
And flout each revelation save their own.

Eden Phillpotts.

CHAPTER IV

Should the Truth be Told? Systematic Non-Theological Moral Instruction. The Silent Sceptic. A Last Word.

Should the Truth be Told?

CHURCH dignitaries of the Modernist school are often, I find, perfectly prepared to make private and confidential admissions concerning the positions they have had to vacate, but there the matter usually rests. It is only in comparatively rare cases that some of these admissions are disclosed from the pulpit, and even then in such becomingly vague terms that both the preacher and his congregation are able to persuade themselves that they are still of the Christian faith. As a rule the vital question of the want of evidence for the Resurrection is studiously avoided, or rapidly glossed over. A prick of conscience can be quieted by conjuring up that magical

word "Faith." (Please read section 3, "Religious Experience," Chapter VI, of my book.)

A popular preacher once said to me—I mention this as a typical example—"Why call yourself an Agnostic? I am just as much an Agnostic as you are, but I am saved by an act of faith." He never suspected, apparently, that his act of faith might be simply an act of auto-suggestion, a suggestion all the more powerful through the habit having been continuously in operation from his childhood. I forget my reply, but it should have been couched in the words of Dean Inge: "The healthy human intellect will never believe that the same proposition may be true for faith and untrue in fact; but this is the Modernist contention" (*Outspoken Essays*, first series, p. 201).

One of the reasons why I consider my Appeal for Candour amply justified is that these private admissions are so seldom brought to public notice, and the rising generation continues to be taught what is known to be untrue. The evil of this is

commented on in my book, p. 248, and the entire question, "Should the truth be told?" is discussed in section 3 of Chapter VIII. As long as the curse of demonstrably false and harmful supersititions sways human affairs; as long as the progress of man towards greater happiness is being retarded; as long as adherence to Machiavelli's doctrine of using religion as a dope causes the concealment of known facts; as long as my fellow human beings are being fed with mischievous fairy tales; as long as man or woman suffers disability for intellectual honesty; as long as the truth is suppressed; as long as hypocrisy is rampant; so long shall I strive during the few years I have left to obtain the widest possible range of readers for this my appeal.

I have used the adjective "mischievous" advisedly. A stronger term would not be out of place. If the tales were harmless, and still more if they were beneficial, my appeal would never have been written. Circumstances may arise where the blunt

truth ought not—nay, cannot—be told. There are no such circumstances in this case, no solid excuses for hiding the untruths, since the superstitions based on them are baneful. Ignorance of the seamy side of the history of religions, and of the fact that all amelioration has been due to the rise and influence of truth and reason, explains why so many—they include thousands of sceptics who remain silent and whose practical interest in the greatest of all causes would make all the difference to its progress—fail to see that these false beliefs always have been, and always will be, a source of woe to mankind. Every problem, too, every menace crying out at this moment for sane treatment, requires our utmost intelligence, not brains clouded by superstitions How, for example, can the problem of population, or, what is so intimately connected with it, the problem of war or any of the many social problems, be rightly grappled with when these phantoms of the brain continue to point in the wrong direction?

An excellent answer to the question "Should the truth be told?" will be found at the commencement of Colonel Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses.* I extract the following, expressing a hope that my readers will possess themselves of the lecture (summary obtainable from the Pioneer Press, Farringdon Street, London, post free for 3*d.*): "Ladies and Gentlemen,—Now and then someone asks me why I am endeavouring to interfere with the religious faith of others, and why I try to take from the world the consolation naturally arising from a belief in eternal fire. And I answer: I want to do what little I can to make my country truly free; I want to broaden the intellectual horizon of our people. I want it so that we can differ upon all these questions, and yet grasp each other's hands in genuine friendship. I want, in the first place, to free the clergy. I am a great friend of theirs, but they don't seem to have found it out generally. I want it so that every minister will not be a parrot, nor an owl sitting upon a dead limb of the tree of

knowledge and hooting the hoots that have been hooted for 1,800 years. . . . I want to free the schools of the country. I want it so that when a professor in a college finds some fact inconsistent with Moses he will not hide the fact; that it will not be the worse for him for having discovered the fact. I wish to see an eternal divorce and separation between church and schools. The common school is the bread of life; but there should be nothing taught in the schools except what somebody *knows*. Nothing else should be maintained by a system of general taxation. . . . I want the people splendid enough that when they desire men to make laws for them they will take those who know something, who have brains enough to prophesy the destiny of the American Republic, no matter what their opinion may be upon any religious subject . . . and let us all remember that our views depend largely upon the country in which we happen to live. Suppose we were born in Turkey, most of us would be Mohammedans; and

when we read in the book that when Mohammed visited heaven he became acquainted with an angel named Gabriel, who was so broad between his eyes that it would take a smart camel three hundred days to make the journey, we probably would have believed it. If we had not, people would have said: 'That young man is dangerous; he is trying to tear down the fabric of our religion. What do you propose to give us instead of that angel? We cannot afford to trade off an angel of that size for nothing!' If we had been born in India, we would believe in a God with three heads; now we believe in three Gods with one head. And so we might make a tour of the world, and see that every superstition that could be imagined by the brain of man has been in some places held to be sacred. Now someone says: 'The religion of my father and mother is good enough for me.' Suppose we all said that, where would be the progress of the world? We would have the rudest and most barbaric religion, which no one could believe. . . .

Every nation has had what you call a sacred record; and the older, the more sacred, the more contradictory, the more inspired is the record."

The truth about the Pentateuch is known now to everyone who has at all studied the matter, but the reasons given by Ingersoll for proclaiming the truth generally remain as valid as ever.

In a recent review of my book in the *Cape Times* the reviewer, a Unitarian minister, concludes a most generous appreciation with an expression of disappointment at what he calls my negative bias, and asks me to "imagine any or all of the great Churches in South Africa or in Christendom —the Dutch Reformed Church, the Anglican, the Roman Catholic, the Wesleyan, the Presbyterian—suddenly taken away from the people of the country or from the world. Would not a considerable portion of mankind be in danger of slipping back towards lower levels of life and civilization?"

He cannot, I think, have given full attention to my Chapter VII, on "Fallacies

in Popular Arguments," and especially he must have overlooked Section 3, dealing with the idea held so widely, and not confined to Christian believers alone, that the overthrow of Christianity would endanger society and the nation.

As to "lower levels of life," the lowest was reached in the ages when the Christian Faith had its fullest sway, and samples of it may yet be found, especially where the Roman Church is still all-powerful, or where the Greek Church was until quite lately a paramount influence. Besides, why assume this extreme suddenness? Not only would it be quite unlikely to occur, say, in the British Empire or in the United States of America, but it would be from every point of view to be deprecated. I have no intention, and it would be very foolish, to attempt to prophesy exactly what would take the place of all the institutions affected by the world waking up to the truth; but I have every confidence that the spirit of Scientific Humanitarianism would see to it that all was ordered to

obtain the maximum benefit to mankind with a minimum of disturbance. Years ago Bradlaugh spoke as a true Rationalist when he told a Northampton audience (Jan. 30, 1891), "I am of the stock of reformers; I am not of the stock of revolutionists."

What my kind reviewer's query really amounts to is the usual and natural one the religionist puts to the militant sceptic: "What are you putting in the place of the beliefs and customs based on them that you would destroy? You destroy; do you construct?"

There can be no doubt of the militant Rationalist's desire to construct. It is his first impulse. Read the essays on Charles Bradlaugh's life-work in the Bradlaugh Centenary volume, recently published under the title of *Champion of Liberty: Charles Bradlaugh* (edited by J P. Gilmour and published by Watts and the Pioneer Press, London, 1933), or the *Life-Story of Charles Bradlaugh* (by the Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson, Watts, by post 1*s*. 3*d*.). Read, too, the *Life-Story of Ingersoll* (by C. T. Gorham,

Watts, by post 1s. 3d.) and learn some little of the marvellous life-work of America's greatest Freethinker, whose centenary also took place in the year 1933. Countless instances of constructive work are known to readers of such works as Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England*, Lecky's *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, Benn's *Modern England*, Perry-coste's *Religion and Mòral Civilization*, McCabe's *The Bible in Europe*, etc., etc. Striking examples, such as the abolition of slavery and the raising of woman's status, are given in my book, pp. 27, 198–204, and 295–6. To Rationalism, and to Rationalism alone, is due the passing of the era of witch torture and witch murder. Even for such an obvious blessing as the use of anæsthetics Rationalism had to fight down religious prejudices.

What should be remembered, too, is Science's great debt to Rationalism for having cleared her path. In the Dark Ages—the ages of Faith, of the Churches' dominance — the only bright spot for

centuries was Arab culture. The destruction of mediævalism had to take place before construction by Science could commence. Cuvier's words are no exaggeration: "The greatest service that one can render to Science is to make the ground clear before constructing anything there." I am referring to some of these points again at the close of this essay in a special note concerning the silent sceptic.

But I often wonder whether people fully realize the difficulty of construction, in advance of, or side by side with, destruction. At times it is almost as if one were trying to build decent houses in a slum area before the destruction of the hovels and the removal of the debris. Consider, for example, the problem of an improvement in the plans at present in vogue (where there are any) for systematic education in right conduct. It is of such extreme importance that I feel bound to run the risk of prolonging these notes unduly rather than miss this opportunity of commenting on it.

The advocates of secular education, on the other hand, expect to end the long-drawn-out squabble concerning the teaching of religion in State schools. They claim that there would be no support for Freethought, also no unfriendliness to religion, and no danger to the Faith of the children. Dr. Cillie is not at all sure about this, and I must admit there are grounds for his suspicions. He scents danger to the Faith; and danger, from his point of view, there certainly would be, more especially if there were, as assuredly there ought to be, systematic moral education. Vice versa, I, as a Rationalist, scent the danger that, owing to these fears of the Cillies, secular education, if ever introduced in England, might have no provision for moral education. Honestly, I am not prepared to say which I think would be worse—education that included false beliefs plus a moral education of sorts, or one that excluded both.

Rather than accept the "Bible in Schools" compromise, Roman Catholics would submit to the secular solution—

minus moral education *bien entendu*—but so wealthy and formidable is their organization for guarding and increasing the fold that I can well understand their preference for ignorance of religion and the absence of moral instruction in the school to a definitely Protestant atmosphere.

I invite sceptical parents in particular to think over this point, since, no doubt with a high motive, they sometimes go out of their way not to influence their children in the matter of religious beliefs, and consequently never give instruction regarding the grounds for rejecting them. The result is that their daughters later on are liable to fall an easy prey to father confessors. Converts to the Church of Rome are far more easily made from sufficiently ignorant persons who are without any religion than from those strictly brought up in the tenets of one or other of the Protestant Churches. That is perhaps one of the reasons why Roman Catholic priests often appear to be more at home with Freethinkers, so long as they are not militant,

than they are with members of the Churches *that are anathema to Rome.*

But I have diverged somewhat. The main point we are noticing is the very understandable hostility to non-theological moral education of every one of the Churches, however virulently opposed to one another in matters of doctrine. Let us hear the Rationalist. He cries: "Put the children of England under the best *moral influence, and England shall be* righteous." "You should not allow your children to be taught a false belief and a false basis of morality." "Side by side with the knowledge of the untruth of this or that religious belief there should be inculcated a knowledge of the origin and need of morality." "Systematic non-theological moral instruction should form part of the curriculum of all schools, and this assistance in the formation of character should be the aim of school life as much as, or even more than, vocational or any other aim." "Ethical principles on which we all agree should not be associated with

theological principles on which we all differ." (See also pp. 243, 248, and 293–4 of my book)

This matter of moral instruction, or, as I prefer to call it, conduct instruction or character-training, is one of transcendent importance. Every day it becomes more urgent. Mr. Wells predicts a wave of crime. I know nothing about this—it is to be expected, perhaps, as a back-wash from the Great War, when every combatant was taught to "see red"—but I do know that the amount of downright dishonesty prevalent in every grade of society in Christendom is appalling. Our young people grow up to find that the main reasons once given them for right-doing are a subject of doubt, and even of ridicule. They are robbed of their basis for conduct. Surely it would have been better had they been given the real reasons for decent conduct in their childhood and early youth; reasons that they will find hold good all their lives. Morality is the result of evolution, not of revelation, and conduct should be built on

the solid rock of science, not on the shifting sand of superstition. Immorality cannot be cured by immoral means.

The danger incurred in resting morality upon theology was pointed out long ago by Matthew Arnold in his *Literature and Dogma*. Speaking of a person treating "what is extra-belief and not certain as if it were a matter of certainty, and in making it his ground for action," he warns us how "the time comes when he discovers that it is not certain, and then the whole certainty of religion seems discredited, and the basis of conduct is gone." (See also my remarks on the danger of obscurantism, pp. 245–8 of the Thinker's Library edition of *The Churches and Modern Thought.*)

Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, late Minister of Education, Bombay, and now Vice-Chancellor of the Lucknow University, has written a most interesting and informing little book entitled *The Crux of the Indian Problem* (Watts, 1931). From its perusal, it seems to me that wonders could be worked in the schools of India by the

introduction of systematic moral instruction. It should be easier to inaugurate it in India, where the State education already rests on a secular basis, the British Government being pledged to a policy of strict religious neutrality. Only in some of the aided schools maintained by Indian managers or by missionary bodies is there ethical teaching mingled with the religious instruction.

Mr. F. J. Gould, who served the Moral Instruction League in 1910–15 as lecturer and demonstrator, and who is the author of invaluable works for the moral instruction of the young, toured in 1913 in the Bombay Presidency by arrangement with the Bombay Government. His lectures received enthusiastic appreciation. He has delivered ethical lessons to youth publicly in more than two hundred places in Britain, in nine cities in India, and in forty cities in the U.S.A.; and he was Hon. Sec. of the International Congress of Moral Education (Geneva, 1922; Rome, 1926; Paris, 1930). I earnestly recommend his *Bright Lamps of*

History and Daily Life (Vols. I and II) to parents. A full list of his books, published by Allen and Unwin, Museum Street, London, W.C. 1; Longmans, Paternoster Row, London, E.C. 4; Co-operative Union, Hanover Street, Manchester; and Watts, Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4, can be obtained post free from the last named.

Why systematic moral education has not as yet been introduced in India and Burma it is not easy to understand, unless it be that here again the difficulty arises to some extent from the entanglement of ethics and religion. However, let us hope that what I am advocating may come about. The Institute of Rural Reconstruction, founded by Rabindranath Tagore, seems a step in the right direction. (Read *Reconstruction and Education in Rural India*, by Dr. Prem Chand Lal; Allen & Unwin, 1933.)

The extent to which the human race would benefit by correct education in conduct, starting at an age when suggestion is particularly effective and lasting, is

incalculable. Without this common-sense —call it "utilitarian" if you will—instruction in our youth, few of us can hope to appreciate at their worth, and much less live up to, those lines of Tennyson (in "Œnone"):—

> Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
> These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
> Yet not for power (power of herself
> Would come uncall'd for), but to live by law,
> Acting the law we live by without fear;
> And, because right is right, to follow right
> Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

Here we are given what Samuel Laing, in his charming and instructive chapter on "Practical Life" in *Modern Science and Modern Thought* (Watts, London), happily calls "the gospel of practical life." "Rightly considered, 'self-reverence, self-knowledge, and self-control' are the three pillars which support the edifice of a wise and well-ordered practical life." "Among the many advantages of self-respect not the least important is that it teaches respect for others." Self-knowledge is "a gift

which is, unfortunately, as rare as it is necessary. Without self-knowledge to see our faults, how shall we correct them? How shall we become wise if insensible to our follies?" Self-control: "this is, after all, the vitally important element of a happy and successful life. The compass (self-respect) may point truly to the pole, the chart (self-knowledge) may show the right channel amidst shoals and rocks, but the ship will hardly arrive safely in port unless the helmsman stands at his post in all weathers, ready to meet any sheer of the bow by a timely turn to starboard or to port."

We have, then, the compass, the chart, and the rudder. To complete the analogy, I suggest the emotions as the motive force. They are obviously essential, but need exceedingly careful guidance. They are not, as the mystic regards them, in themselves a guide to sound religious beliefs.

The Silent Sceptic.

I have drawn attention above to the case of the sceptic who remains silent, and I am now asking his kind consideration of the following earnest appeal to him :—

"The world would be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of its brightest ornaments, of those most distinguished even in popular estimation for wisdom and virtue, are complete sceptics in religion." This declaration by John Stuart Mill, the Utilitarian philosopher, in his *Autobiography* some three generations ago, is as true now as it was then. Indeed, the proportion of such sceptics must be considerably greater. Far too many leaders of their fellow men, who are perfectly well aware of the truth, refrain through various motives, as Mill deplores, from speaking out. Sceptics in religion, distinguished and undistinguished, are spread over the whole globe—their name is legion—but the vast majority of them display this same reticence and same fainéant attitude towards Freethought

propaganda. The aid which they refuse or fail to proffer would make all the difference to the progress of Rationalism.

Unemotional reasoning, not emotional charitableness, leads me to the conclusion that the attitude of these secret dissentients from the orthodox religion (to be found in their thousands in Christendom, India, Turkey, China, and Japan) springs more often than not from a genuine conviction that this or that religion, however saturated with absurd superstitions, is beneficial and necessary. The more or less sordid motive (vested interests, etc.) is not, as one is liable to assume, the main one. Altruism rather than egoism is the determining factor.

This, if I am correct in my estimate, is an important point. Open the eyes of these altruists, prove to their satisfaction that they are in error, that the diametrically opposite is the fact, and the same spirit which dictated their silence regarding the truth will urge them, as it urges you and me, to proclaim it. On the other hand, were egoism predominant, we should be

up against something very different. We should be engaged in an unequal struggle with those who batten on men's gullibility, and for whom the preservation of false beliefs, however pernicious, is a *sine qua non*. We may congratulate ourselves, therefore, that such as these are by no means representative of the average sceptic of to-day.

I grant that, besides the high motive I claim to be so general, a less exalted one may be present. My personal experience is, however, that this modicum of egoism seldom amounts to more than a natural dislike for controversy, or an aversion to giving distress or displeasure to others, conventionalism, and so on. It must be remembered, too, that religious persecution, though, thanks to Rationalism, no longer bathed in blood, is still with us. Thus the sceptic is often so placed that unless he is prepared to be a martyr he must keep his convictions to himself. He cannot afford, for example, to lose his job or be ruined in his profession or trade. Again, his wife

may not share his views, and so his domestic happiness is at stake. Egoism, if it can be called by that name, springing from such causes, is understandable and pardonable, and is not going to prevent him from seizing the first opportunity to give, by hook or by crook, a helping hand to Rationalism when he has realized that it is his duty to do so.

As it is at present, our silent sceptic, who knows of the absurdities of religion, knows little or nothing of its enormities. His (or her) blood has never boiled with indignation, as yours and mine has, in visualizing the horrors in the train of every one of these false superstitions as well in the recent as in the remote past—horrors which would be renewed were Rationalism defeated. As Buckle has well remarked, "the great antagonist of intolerance is not humanity, but knowledge" (*History of Civilization in England*, vol. i, pp. 188–9), and Rationalism's task is to spread it. "A careful study of the history of religious toleration will prove that in every Christian

country where it has been adopted it has been forced on the clergy by the authority of the secular classes" (idem, p. 337). Doubtless every one of these sceptics is aware that for many centuries of the Christian era there was a ghastly institution called the Inquisition; but does he know that even now, according to Catholic principles laid down in the *Catholic Encyclopædia*, all this torturing, killing, and maiming is by no means condemned by the Church of Rome? Only the Protestant Churches, who were equally bloodthirsty, are now definitely contrite.

Then, again, what does this silent sceptic know of the hideous cruelties, at their zenith in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, occasioned by the belief in witchcraft and perpetrated alike by Protestants and Catholics? Does he realize that this belief is so much part and parcel of that Bible teaching to which his silence gives assent that as late as 1768 we find Wesley stating that to give up the belief in witchcraft was in effect giving up the Bible?

No; it is only fair to assume that this silent person, woman or man, can have little or no knowledge of how human happiness and progress have suffered from religions and their exponents and ministers. He or she can never have read works—I chiefly select those referring to the Christian religion—so enlightening as Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*, Lecky's *The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, Ingersoll's *Rome or Reason?* Robertson's *A Short History of Christianity*, Haynes's *Religious Persecution*, McCabe's *The Bible in Europe*, the same author's *The Popes and their Church*, Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner's *The Christian Hell*, Chapman Cohen's *Religion and Sex*, or, to mention the most recent, Van Loon's *The Liberation of Mankind* and Paranjpye's *The Crux of the Indian Problem*.

When, as Mr. McCabe points out in the Preface to *The Bible in Europe*, obviously sceptical writers urge that the maintenance of religion is essential to the maintenance of civilization, and when they solemnly

repeat that the Bible is the source of England's greatness, is it any wonder that other unbelievers of less culture also give their sympathy to the clergy rather than to the Rationalists? One excuse for this conduct is that we are so accustomed to hear every humane or unselfish deed, and every moral act, described as Christian that "good" and "Christian" have almost become synonymous terms. So also with the other great religions. They take the credit of all that is ethical in their teaching, although it pre-existed and was taken over by them.

Lack of funds hinders the march of Rationalism more than anything else. The amount of advertisement that can be afforded for enlightening publications is deplorably inadequate, with the result that most informative books and journals, instead of reaching a large number of the ill-informed and unconverted where most required, circulate chiefly among small groups of the well-informed and converted where least required. Consider how such a

disability would bear upon the progress of any Cause. It is publicity, ever more and more of it, which will hasten the reign of Rationalism. It is the master-key which will open every gate now barring its advance.

The case of the silent scientist was somewhat vividly brought home to me by chance at the time I was writing my notes on Professor Einstein's criticisms of indeterminism. It so happened that I was at that time staying within a few hundred yards of the Professor's then (August, 1933) residence in Belgium, and thus made his acquaintance. My brief conversations with him helped me to understand better than ever before how men of science must, quite naturally, be far too engrossed in their own exacting tasks to be able to take a lively interest in such a topic as harmful superstitions, much less to take a prominent or active part in exposing them. Scientists, in these days particularly, have to be specialists. They have every reason to think twice before taking on additional work off their line. The world, too, with

which they are familiar is that of science, not that of the colossal ignorance and infinite credulity with which Rationalism is at grips. Often they are quite unaware of the frightful history of supernatural religion, or are so superficially informed that there is nothing to induce them to take an active part in combating religious error; nothing to arouse their interest or their ire through a full knowledge of the curse of superstition. All they ask is to be left alone; but they do not recognize that they owe their freedom from interference to militant Freethought. They, together with many men of letters and philosophers holding advanced views, fail to perceive, apparently, how much they have to be thankful for to the brave Freethinking pioneers, "the born champions, strong men, the liberatory Samsons of this poor world." The outstanding exceptions, the Huxleys among the scientists, or the Ingersolls and Bradlaughs among the orators, are few and far between.

Thus it was only to be expected that, after Professor Einstein had kindly glanced

over my book, I should have found myself explaining to him why I wrote it, and why such a book was wanted now more than ever. Colonel Ingersoll once—it was in the year I was born—delivered a lecture entitled "Progress," in which he said: "Somebody ought to tell the truth about the Bible." After instancing persons so situated that they dared not do it, he added: "And so I thought I would do it myself." That is the sort of *thing* I wanted to explain to Professor Einstein, and in this interview with one of the world's greatest scientists I should have been glad to have had at my elbow as my advocate one of the world's greatest orators, Ingersoll. He would have struck the right chord to convince the Professor of the necessity for proclaiming the truth. He might have expatiated, for example, with his matchless eloquence, on the Professor's own particular debt to the rise and influence of Rationalism: how it had enabled him to give to the world his famous contributions to knowledge unhampered and uninjured

by the long, cruel arm of the bigot. A defender of the Jews, he would have known how to point his argument by a soul-stirring picture of their fate in Germany to-day. Ingersoll, the author of *The Mistakes of Moses*, could have laid bare the mistakes of Hitler, singling out, say, for his shaft that affirmation of the German Chancellor in his *Mein Kampf*: "I believe to-day that I am acting according to the will of the Almighty by fighting the Jew: by fighting the Jew I am fighting for the work of the Lord!"

Rationalism is the sworn enemy of bigotry and its oft-times attendants, persecution and bloodshed. The world's most famous scientist, selflessly absorbed in his purpose "to know truth, which is light and eternal" (Einstein's own words), and his ill-treated race, have no better friend in their present trials at the hands of Christians than the Freethinker who is true to his ideals of freedom. Was it not those sturdy Freethinkers, Zola and Clémenceau, who righted the terrible wrong done to

Dreyfus by Catholics? And now Evangelicals seem emulating Catholics! Wherever terrorism raises its gory head, West or East, Rationalism whole-heartedly condemns it, whatever its avowed object may happen to be. For this reason, therefore, if for no other, the sceptic, now so silent, may welcome the reign of Rationalism, and extend a helpful hand to those who seek to hasten its advent.

A Last Word.

A clergyman, when reviewing my book recently, remarked: "It was sent out as 'an appeal for candour,' and doubtless attained its object of making people think honestly, whether they agreed with it or not. But it must be submitted now that that last phrase ought to have no place in the sub-title if the book is still to be regarded as a polemic—the author should respect his own appeal for candour."

His comment shows the necessity for this supplementary volume. What his contention comes to is that the latest admissions

—concessions to what the "vulgar" Freethinker has been saying all along for ages past—and the consequent revisions in the teachings of the modern churchman, plus the alleged reconciliation with science which we have been inquiring into, deprive me of the right to call my book any longer "an appeal for candour." I can only say that the day I could conscientiously withdraw this sub-title would be one of the happiest in my life.

Canon Streeter finds it difficult to excuse "the ineptitudes talked about religion by some distinguished writers who seem to identify religion with the religious instruction given in Victorian nurseries" (*Buddha and the Christ*, p. 31). I, for my part, lament the fact that these distinguished writers should be forced to take into account the religious instruction given in Victorian nurseries, for the simple reason that this same instruction is still being given in our nurseries and in our schools. As long as this farce continues, how can I begin even to think of dropping my sub-title?

To "appeal for candour" was always

one of the mainsprings of my writing my book. The acknowledgment by a few of the more outspoken among the clergy of the obviously false in the Bible and in the teaching of the Churches—an acknowledgment, be it remembered, known only to a minute section of Christendom, and almost totally unnoticed in the religious instruction of the rising generations or in our institutions, our ceremonies, our laws (the second reading of the new Blasphemy Bill was passed this year in the House of Commons by a majority of 4 to 1!), etc., etc.—these things do not call upon me to withdraw my appeal, but rather to press on with it.

To those unwilling—fearful?—to read anything in the nature of an investigation into the grounds for their faith, I say: "Please, then, read your Bible. It is meant to be read, not kept on a shelf or regarded as a mascot." As Ingersoll said in his *Mistakes of Moses*: "Everybody talks about the Bible, and nobody reads it; that is the reason it is so generally believed."

Personally I am of opinion that if by a miracle it became the fashion for all who now call themselves Christians really to study their Bibles, the Christian religion, as we know it, would in these days of better education and increased knowledge soon automatically cease to exist. Willy-nilly, the reader would become a sceptic In fact, if the Rationalist propagandist could make sure that the Bible, New and Old Testament, would receive a full and genuine study by the intelligentzia, it would be the book for him to boom in order to secure converts to Rationalism!

No Church recognizes this danger of a real knowledge of the Bible better than the Church of Rome, and she shows her insight and astuteness in discouraging Bible study. As it is, the perusal permitted by the other Churches has resulted in splits in every direction, so that no man dare touch upon religion in ordinary every-day social life out of the circle of home and of intimate acquaintances. Educated men and women have their own pet versions—interpreta-

tions with many mental reservations—which they prefer to keep to themselves to avoid controversy. These versions are still founded upon demonstrable falsehoods fondly believed to be ascertained facts.

Quot homines, tot sententiæ, thus it must always be; but the differences in opinions should certainly not be accentuated through many of them being based upon falsehoods, and those falsehoods of a kind that inevitably lead to violent animosities and to dogmas that bar urgent reforms. Differences of opinion are, moreover, greatly due to environment, and this potent factor will tend, in a Rationalist atmosphere, to bring our aspirations, and opinions generally, more into unison. Optimism is permissible, I suggest, when we find a gathering of the representatives of the nations with but one exception enthusiastically approving rational arguments of world-wide significance. I am alluding to the reception of the address by the Austrian Chancellor, Dr. Dollfuss, to the Assembly of the League of Nations on September 27, 1933. Among

much else that was noteworthy and of universal application, the Chancellor uttered a profound truth when he said: "Not indeed by fratricidal strife, but by co-operation, can the nations solve the great problems of our era."

The United States of the World, the Brotherhood of Man: these may be a long way off, but they will come; for one day, I hope and believe, Rationalism will reign supreme. It will be a day when patriotism, when pride of country, when emulation between nations or states, will be centred on attaining a foremost place in the Service of Man.

> For a' that, and a' that,
> It's coming yet for a' that,
> That man to man, the warld o'er,
> Shall brothers be for a' that.

In conclusion, may I say that if I thought for one moment that my inquiry into the grounds of unbelief and my appeal for candour, made many years ago, were in any sense calculated to mislead, not only should I cease taking a personal interest

in the circulation of the book, but I should stop its further publication. As a matter of fact, there is a certain advantage in this lapse of time. Ample opportunity has been afforded for the discovery of any error. The Churches, to whom the book is well known—I have taken care of that—have had every chance of bringing a misstatement to my notice. Also, I have had the benefit of numerous reviews, a copious correspondence, and many a discussion; and, with respect to my excursions into the realm of Science, I may mention how glad I have been to learn only recently from one of the most eminent in that realm, Sir Arthur Keith, that in his opinion "the work is excellently conceived and as excellently executed." May these supplementary pages reinforce its appeal for candour and thus promote the true welfare and happiness of my fellow man.

Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire?

¶ The book which is arousing interest everywhere.

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